UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/C.2/51/1
20 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
SECOND COMMITTEE

ALLOCATION OF ITEMS TO THE SECOND COMMITTEE

Letter dated 20 September 1996 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Second Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the decisions taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting pertaining to the allocation of items to the Second Committee (see annex).

I wish to draw your attention to the recommendations on the organization of the session contained in section II of the report of the General Committee (A/51/250). Those recommendations were also approved by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting.

May I also draw your attention to paragraph 38 of section IV and to the relevant part of paragraph 44 of section V of the report concerning the agenda of the Main Committees.

I earnestly request your cooperation in these matters.

(Signed) RAZALI Ismail

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ANNEX

Allocation of items to the Second Committee

1. Report of the Economic and Social Council [chaps. I, III, IV, V (sects. B to E and H) and VII] (item 12).

[The General Assembly decided that the chapters of the report listed below would be referred also to plenary meetings and to the Third and Fifth Committees, as follows:

(a) Chapters I and VII ..... Plenary meetings and Third and Fifth Committees

(b) Chapters III and IV ..... Plenary meetings and Third Committee

(c) Chapter V (sect. E) ..... Third and Fifth Committees]

2. Macroeconomic policy questions (item 94):

(a) External debt crisis and development;

(b) Financing of development, including net transfer of resources between developing and developed countries;

(c) Trade and development;

(d) Commodities.

3. Sectoral policy questions (item 95):

(a) Industrial development cooperation;

(b) Food and sustainable agricultural development.

4. Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (item 96):

(a) Implementation and follow-up to major consensus agreements on development:

(i) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of the Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries;

(ii) Implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade;

(b) Agenda for development:

(i) Agenda for development;

(ii) Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership;

(c) Integration of the economies in transition into the world economy;

(d) Population and development;

(e) Human settlements;

(f) Eradication of poverty;

(g) Cultural development.

5. Environment and sustainable development (item 97):

(a) Implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(b) Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21;

(c) Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(d) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;

(e) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind;

(f) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

6. Operational activities for development (item 98):

[The General Assembly decided that the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on the operations, management and budget of the United Nations Development Fund for Women should be referred to the Second Committee for consideration under item 98.]

[The General Assembly decided that, in the light of Economic and Social Council decision 1996/226 of 10 July 1996, the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the operations of the United Nations Children's Fund should be held in plenary meeting on Wednesday, 11 December 1996, in the morning.]

[The General Assembly also decided that the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256), which is relevant to item 98 and to item 106 (Promotion and protection of the rights of children) should be introduced in

plenary and referred also to the Third Committee for consideration under item 106.]

7. Training and research (item 99):

(a) United Nations Institute for Training and Research;

(b) United Nations University.

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Fifty-first session
SECOND COMMITTEE

Letter dated 6 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to the Chairman of the Second Committee

Judging from the numerous examples that have been brought to the attention of the Committee on Conferences, it would appear that many intergovernmental bodies are under the impression that conference-servicing resources are abundant if not unlimited, to draw a parallel with natural resources. In fact, the demand for services continues to grow even as the Organization endeavours to cut back in response to the increasingly severe financial constraints it is experiencing.

Conference-servicing resources are the fuel that keep the Organization's parliamentary machinery running smoothly. However, there is a price to pay for these services. At Headquarters, the notional cost of a single page of documentation in the six official languages is $916, of which $602 stems from translation; the notional cost of one meeting is $4,553, of which $4,194 stems from interpretation. Several years ago, the Committee on Conferences set a benchmark figure of 80 per cent for utilization of allocated conference resources. In 1995, overall utilization at Headquarters, Geneva and Vienna was down to 76 per cent, owing to late starting and early ending of meetings and sessions and repeated cancellation of meetings. Here is another eye-opening figure: if the start of every meeting in New York during a calendar year were delayed 10 minutes, the loss in unutilized conference-servicing resources would amount to around $875,000.

Fortunately, there are common-sense solutions to conserve resources. As a first step, bodies could review their needs with a view to rationalizing requests for services. As for tactics to save time, experience shows that the Chairman's presence in the Conference Room sets an example for other delegates to arrive punctually; full use of meeting time could be ensured if meetings were convened only when an adequate number of speakers are inscribed on the list and if several items were placed on the agenda; sessions could possibly be shortened if a time limit for speakers were set. During the planning stage, arrangements could be made to dovetail brief sessional meetings with those of a body's

regional groups or other bodies meeting on an "as available" basis; and if Conference Services is informed at least a day in advance of a cancellation, the resources thus released can be "recycled" to other groups.

But the conference room is not the only front on which the campaign for improved utilization must be waged. There are also mountains of documentation to be attacked and reduced. Here again, several action-oriented manoeuvres could be carried out: bodies could review their recurrent documentation and eliminate what they deem to be unnecessary; some reports could be considered on a biennial or triennial basis; agenda items could be merged and reports consolidated accordingly, bodies could request oral reports rather than written ones and more important still, they could exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports.

Clearly, intergovernmental bodies are responsible for ensuring rational utilization of conference-servicing resources. The key to the success of this operation to conserve limited resources is the will to redouble efforts so as to reverse a critical situation. I trust we can count on your cooperation in this common cause.

(Signed) El Hassane ZAHID
Chairman
Committee on Conferences